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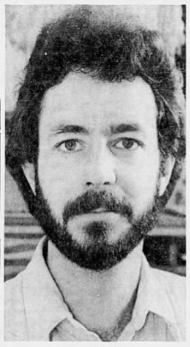
Winchester: A reluctant hero returns


Jesse Winchester: New plans

Rock & Pop
by Juan Rodriguez

The tenth winter for Montreal's own southern gentleman, Jesse Winchester, has begun on a promising note.

After years of erratic performances in small clubs, the singer-songwriter is making a concentrated effort to get an "act" together — with the help of a new band comprised of top sessionmen who've backed numerous local recording stars and vedettes.

The shy, wiry Louisiana-born Winchester has come a long way, in his own reticent manner, since arriving in this northern metropolis in 1966, on the run from the draft system, with nothing but a guitar and a few songs like Yankee Lady and Brand New Tennessee Waltz.

Today, having garnered an international reputation as one of the best songwriters (attested by the growing list of "covers" of his songs), he is in the midst of recording his fourth album.

Although he no longer trembles and clutches at his guitar, as he did in performance during these early times when he was "treadin' water," Jesse is still nervous, something that probably accounts for the distinctive taut edge to his songs. But gone is the anguished plucking of his nylon-string guitar: Jesse has decided to put a little juice into his music.

The new band may well spur Winchester to do some international touring, a task he's never leapt at. As yet, he hasn't felt like returning to the U.S., mainly because he feels his new home here is more in line with his quiet spirit. But he has been considering concert possibilities overseas — beginning last September with a three-week tour in, of all places, Australia.

Grits teeth

"I have a small cult-type following there, enough that I could fill small concert halls. But most of the journalists had never heard of me and the promoters had set up a constant series of interviews, at least two a day and sometimes four. I was constantly having to explain to people who I was, and I can't stand that — I mean, I'm still trying to figure it out myself."

Winchester still grits his teeth through interviews. He tries to be as considered and informative as he can, with that slow southern elocution of his, but he is not big on public opinion-making. However, he is enthused about working on the new album:

"This one's a little more 'produced' than the others. I'm using the skills I had accumulated during my musical education, such as it is; I had learned how to arrange and score parts for different instruments but when I started playing rock 'n' roll and country music and so forth I kinda let that end of things slide. For this album I sorta got back into it and it's really fun, even though it's a very painstaking process for me because I hadn't done it so long. It takes me forever to arrange just one song but it's such a pleasure to do it and see it work, fit together like a puzzle. It's opened up a whole new area for me."

So has the new band, consisting of bassist Marty Harris, drummer Chris Castle and guitarist Bob Cohen. These musicians have worked with the likes of Diane Dufresne, Aut'Chose, Tony Roman, Michel Pagliaro, Randy Bishop, Anne Anderson and other stars of the local scene.

With them, Winchester seems more eager to take up his position in the scheme of things. He is currently in the middle of a two week run at the Edgewater Hotel, then he moves over to the Hotel Nelson's Eveché club starting Dec. 16, followed by appearances in the new year at Valentin's and the Cinema Outremont.

Jesse is still a reluctant hero — he seems much more willing to indulge his catholic conservative tastes, such as reading Churchill's History of the English Speaking Peoples — but fans have been waiting a long time for him to put his music on the road.

His current studio and band settings auger well for that to happen.

Michael Caine terrific

Peeper is good fun in the private-eye style

By DANE LANKEN
of The Gazette

"Leslie Tucker, Investigator. Select your investigator as you would your lawyer or physician."

So says Leslie Tucker (Michael Caine) when he picks up the phone in his combination office-bedroom in 1947 Los Angeles.

Tucker is an investigator, a private eye, a "peeper" in the movie called Peeper (at the Claremont and Dorval) that pays a fawning homage to Hammett and Chandler — and still comes out a clever, stylish, interesting and enjoyable movie.

It's not perfect — there are holes in the story, or at least moments that let down. But it's good. Caine in a bowtie and a fedora is terrific. Natalie Wood (in her first movie since Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice in 1969) is wonderful as the woman Leslie Tucker, Investigator, can't figure out.

But it is the script, the lines that really make the movie. They're almost too precious: You can tell that the people who wrote this film have studied Bogart and read The Big Sleep 10 times.

But they're good to hear.

"Do I know you, or just your type?" asks Natalie Wood as Michael Caine tramps through her father's baronial home.

VILLAINS

Then there are the villains. Timothy Carey (heavy-eyed and loathsome) and Don Calfa (a weasel like Roman Polanski in Chinatown) are some of the best in years.

"Hurry up and talk, Tucker," the little guy warns the Investigator. "We got other people to hurt today besides yourself."

Peeper might take a little getting used to. You can't be sure at first if it's just another bad movie or truly campy and clever. Happily, the style holds up, however. With only one or two lapses, the lines keep coming, the pace holds, the look and feel of the film stay true.

The script is the work of W. D. Richter, who wrote Slither, and it is based on the book Deadfall by Keith Laumer, who has fans among both science fiction and detective novel enthusiasts.

The director is Peter Hyams, a young director (and former war correspondent, jazz drummer, grandson of Sol Hurok and TV writer). He does just about everything right here, including overseeing some very good screen fights.

Michael Caine as private eye in Peeper

CHRIST CHURCH CATHEDRAL
(cornerUniversity and St. Catherine)
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ADVENT PROCESSION WITH CAROLS
Hymns, Carols and Readings for the Advent Season with the Men & Boys' Choirs of the Cathedral and St. Matthias'

A FUN SHOW FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY!
Evenings this week sold out.
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The Gazette
The Montreal Star
NOV. 27 — DEC. 20
Canadian Gothic & AMERICAN MODERN
by Joanna M. Glass
Mastercharge & Chargex accepted on phone orders
centaur theatre company 288-1229

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COMPLETED APPLICATION FORMS MUST BE SUBMITTED BY Friday, January 9, 1976

GROPUS 7
LUCIANO BERIO: SEQUENZA 1, SEQUENZA 3, SEQUENZA 4
MAURICIO KAGEL: PAS DE 5
Nicolas Desjardins, Alain Fournier, Marcelle Guertin, Anne Jalbert, Pauline Vaillancourt
SOCIÉTÉ de MUSIQUE CONTEMPORAINE du QUÉBEC
JEUDI 11 DECEMBRE 20H30
SALLE POLLACK
555, rue sherbrooke ouest
billets $ 4.50 étudiants $ 2.50 en vente à l'alternatif et au guichet (12h à 14h lundi au vendredi)
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DECEMBER 16 & 17 at 7:30 p.m.
Tickets: $8 $7 $5 $4
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CHARGEX 932-2234 MASTERCHARGE
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Land to forget

Movie bad, models good

Model building enthusiasts and fans of Doug McClure will not want to miss The Land that Time Forgot, the sci-fi epic at the Kent, Laval and Fairview theatres.

There are many excellent models in the movie — animated models of ships and submarines, and (as the scene is the land Time forgot) dinosaurs, too.

And there's Doug McClure, he of the stern visage and head like a block of wood, he who brought distinction to Because They're Young and Beau Geste on the big screen and five seasons of The Virginian on TV.

He plays a rugged ship's passenger here, one of two survivors (the other — surprise! — is a pretty girl) of a German U-boat attack.

Through a series of circumstances too long (much too long) to detail here, McClure, the girl and a subful of sailors end up on this uncharted island which just naturally is crawling with dinosaurs and cavemen. You can tell they're cavemen because of their pronounced eyebrows and inordinate amount of body hair.

CLASSIC

McClure and his gang do what human beings probably would do if they ever met dinosaurs — they shoot them. This might be the cause of the giant volcanic explosion that ends the island, the movie and most of the sub-ful of people. Guess who survives.

Actually, though The Land that Time Forgot is a classic sort of el cheapo monster movie — it seems to have been filmed in the Kew Gardens — there are technical things in it that are first class.

The dinosaurs models for one thing, and the giant volcanic explosion at the end for another. There are balls of orange flame all over the place, columns of smoke (all colors), and flowing lava. At one point, even the ground splits open.

And as if that weren't enough, there's Doug McClure.

D.L.

Anka helps New York

NEW YORK — (UPI-AP) — Pop singer Paul Anka has won a key to the city for his contribution toward solving the New York fiscal crisis.

Mayor Abraham Beame presented the key to the 34-year-old performer Thursday night at the opening of Anka's 10-day engagement before a packed house on Broadway. Anka is donating the proceeds of three of his concerts to the city's office of neighborhood services.

"It is this kind of generosity and compassion which gives New Yorkers good reason to remain optimistic and to work together to stay on top," Beame said.

Anka, a native of Ottawa, began his show business career in New York, opening at the Copacabana at the age of 15. Thursday's performance was his first here in more than 10 years.

Nature movie set for Sunday

John and Janet Foster, the nature photographers and filmmakers, will introduce a showing of their film The Great Gulf at a meeting of the Zoological Society of Canada, Sunday at 7.30 in the Salle Doree of the Sheraton-Mount Royal Hotel.

The movie, an episode in the recent CBC television series To the Wild Country, is a look at the Gulf of St. Lawrence, the Gaspé shore and the land and sea life the area supports.

For more information call the Society at 484-8692.

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